

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

August 17, 2012

State Department Promotes Women as Global Peacemakers	1
Syria's Suspension from Islamic Group Shows Assad's Isolation.....	1
Panetta, Dempsey Reassured By Talks with New Egyptian Leaders.....	2
Operation Ceasefire: Communities Tackling Crime	2
Pacom Works to Advance U.S.-India Strategic Partnership	3
U.S. Pledges More Aid, Continued Support for Syrian People	5
U.S. Trade Deficit Shrinks, Exceeding Economists' Expectations	6
Martian Geography Bears Marks of Tectonic Plates, Research Says.....	6

State Department Promotes Women as Global Peacemakers

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 16 August 2012

Washington — Better integrating women into global efforts to end conflict and promote peace is a critical objective of U.S. diplomacy, according to a new State Department report.

Released August 14, the U.S. Department of State Implementation Plan of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security outlines the department's efforts "to ensure that women participate equally in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence and insecurity."

The State Department said in an August 15 statement that the plan supports President Obama's strategy to enhance women's involvement in building stable and secure societies.

"The Department of State's implementation plan outlines commitments to accelerate, institutionalize and better coordinate efforts to advance women's participation in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and decision-making institutions; protect women from gender-based violence; and ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance in areas of conflict and insecurity," the statement said. It added that the department's efforts demonstrate its commitment to further promoting gender equality in service of U.S. foreign policy and national security.

To mark the release, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verveer and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Deputy Administrator Don Steinberg met with civil society representatives August 14 to discuss U.S. plans to protect and engage women as agents of peace and stability in conflict, crisis and transition-affected environments.

The State Department worked closely with interagency partners, bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society and the private sector in developing its implementation strategy for the national action plan. Thanks to the involvement of such a wide base of stakeholders, the report said, its proposed actions have been verified as "high-impact, necessary [and] achievable."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has said the national action plan marks a change in the way the United States will approach diplomatic, military and development-based support to women in areas of conflict.

"This is not just a women's issue," Clinton said following the plan's White House unveiling December 19, 2011. "It

cannot be relegated to the margins of international affairs. It truly does cut to the heart of our national security and the security of people everywhere."

The State Department's strategy of implementation outlines specific steps to wield diplomatic power in support of women's inclusion in peace talks and politics.

It aims to strengthen U.S. efforts to protect women and children around the world from abuse and exploitation, as well as to promote women's contributions to conflict prevention in pursuit of building lasting peace and stable societies.

The plan also seeks to build women's skills to serve in government and nongovernmental organizations around the world, and supports other nations in developing laws and policies to advance women's participation in making public policy.

The State Department is joined in implementing the action plan by the departments of Defense, Justice, Treasury and Homeland Security, as well as USAID, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

Syria's Suspension from Islamic Group Shows Assad's Isolation

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 16 August 2012

Washington — The Obama administration welcomed the decision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to suspend Syria's membership in the OIC because of the ongoing violence against the Syrian people by Bashar al-Assad's regime.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said August 15 that Syria's suspension "sent a strong message" to the Assad regime and commended the OIC for the move and for its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the 17-month-old conflict.

"Today's action underscores the Assad regime's increasing international isolation and the widespread support for the Syrian people and their struggle for a democratic state that represents their aspirations and respects their human rights," Nuland said in a statement released by the State Department.

The United States sent Special Envoy to the OIC Rashad Hussain to the organization's heads of state summit in the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Hussain held bilateral meetings with several leaders on the margins of the summit to discuss Syria and other issues, according to an August 15 State Department media

note.

"Special Envoy Hussain's attendance demonstrates the United States' commitment to working with our partners in the international community to support the aspirations of the Syrian people and bring additional pressure to bear on the Assad regime," the media note said.

U.N. HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR MORE SYRIA AID

In Damascus, Syria, the United Nations' Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos warned that 2.5 million Syrians are in dire need of assistance, and she urged more international funding to support the efforts of nongovernmental organizations on the ground.

"There is more we could be doing right now in areas that are safe enough and where we have established solid partnerships with NGOs and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent," Amos said August 16, according to the U.N. News Centre.

Many families have been displaced as a result of the violence and are now living in public buildings and schools, and in need of health care, shelter, food, water and sanitation, she said.

The 2.5 million figure is a dramatic increase from Amos' March estimates, when she said 1 million were in need of help, and she said lack of funding, as well as insecurity and restrictions in the country, is holding back existing aid efforts.

On August 11, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that the United States is contributing an additional \$5.5 million in humanitarian assistance to support those who have fled the violence.

"With these contributions, the United States is now providing nearly \$82 million for food, emergency health care, blankets, hygiene kits and other humanitarian relief" for Syrian refugees, Clinton said at a news conference in Istanbul.

Panetta, Dempsey Reassured By Talks with New Egyptian Leaders

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service | 15 August 2012

This article was originally posted August 14 to the Department of Defense website.

Washington — U.S. officials have good relations with the new Egyptian national defense leaders, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said August 14.

Panetta and Army General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with their new Egyptian counterparts earlier in the day, they told reporters at a Pentagon news briefing.

Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi replaced his defense minister and other top generals August 12.

Panetta said he had spoken with Egypt's new defense minister, Army General Abdul Fattah el-Sisi. "He is a highly experienced officer who was trained and spent a lot of time in the United States," the secretary said, adding that he thinks the general trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, and at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

The general "expressed his unwavering commitment to the U.S.-Egypt mil-to-mil relationship, which has been really an anchor of stability in the Middle East for more than 30 years."

Panetta said he told the general he looks forward to continuing the U.S. relationship with the Egyptian military. "General el-Sisi has stressed that he takes seriously Egypt's obligations under the Camp David treaty, and he's committed to preventing the Sinai from becoming a staging area for militants," he said.

Dempsey spoke with Egypt's new armed forces chief of staff, Army General Sidqi Sobhi Sayed. "He is another Army War College graduate, so he's a man with a longstanding relationship with the United States military," he said. "And I sense a positive trend towards civil control of a professional and a respected military."

The relationship between the two militaries transcends individuals, Dempsey said. "I, too, was encouraged by President Morsi's increased emphasis on security in the Sinai, which has been a concern to all of us," he added.

Operation Ceasefire: Communities Tackling Crime

By Lauren Monsen | Staff Writer | 15 August 2012

Washington — In 1995, criminologist David Kennedy developed Operation Ceasefire — a unique framework for tackling inner-city violence — while in Boston with a research team.

The city had experienced a surge in gun-related homicides, so Kennedy, who was with Harvard University at the time, spent six months tracking crime, working closely with a Boston Police Department task force.

"Violence is driven by peer pressure and group dynamics," typically involving young men's responses to perceived disrespect, Kennedy said. Offenses are

committed by a small number of people, even in the most troubled neighborhoods. But perpetrators don't like what's going on any more than residents do, according to Kennedy's research.

Police in Boston had periodically put pressure on gang members, producing a significant — if temporary — cooling of neighborhood "hot spots." Kennedy wanted to use an approach that would work more systematically.

His team collaborated with police, social workers and community leaders to set up meetings with young offenders, advising them that there would be no arrests but that nonattendance would have consequences. Police made it clear they were compiling evidence on offenders and would take action if necessary.

Offenders were invited to bring family members to these meetings, where local residents revealed how crime had scarred their lives.

Kennedy, who today directs the Center for Crime Prevention and Control and teaches at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, said, "I have seen rooms full of 30, 40, 50 of the most dangerous gang members listen to the mother of a murdered young man explain how it's affected her, and they respond with tears streaming down their faces."

Relatives tell offenders that they are loved but that violence is unacceptable. Police reinforce the message by saying they don't want to arrest anyone if they can avoid it, but according to Kennedy, it is the relatives' and neighbors' testimony that has the most powerful effect in deterring crime.

Police officers with whom Kennedy works have been surprised. Police may think that gang members are beyond redemption, but officers see offenders sit respectfully and listen. "The vast majority of gang members aren't sociopaths, or this wouldn't be effective," Kennedy said.

For their part, gang members are surprised when police offer help and say, "We care about you; we don't want to see you killed."

DRAMATIC RESULTS WORLDWIDE

Within 12 months, Operation Ceasefire reduced youth homicide rates in Boston by 60 percent. Later, a corollary program to eliminate open-air drug markets — known as drug-market intervention (DMI) — was developed and spread to at least 100 U.S. cities, by Kennedy's estimate. These cities see dramatic, sustained drops in crime; in High Point, North Carolina, where police introduced a DMI program, crime dropped by nearly 40 percent over a

two-year span.

Other countries are taking notice. In Glasgow, Scotland, police have implemented their own version of Operation Ceasefire, focusing on stabbings. Other parts of the United Kingdom have expressed interest, as have Mexico, Colombia, Australia and some Caribbean Basin countries.

Kennedy's theories are now integrated into policing in Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, Brazil, said Desmond Arias, who teaches political science at John Jay College.

The Belo Horizonte program, known as "Fica Vivo" (Stay Alive), cultivates relationships between police and the community, while the Rio program offers state-run activities and leadership training to young people.

Some programs enlist former offenders, who provide compelling role models to gang members and drug dealers. "Someone who has walked in their shoes but turned himself around shows them that it's possible," Kennedy said.

His research has helped reduce crime, Kennedy added, in large part because he tapped into the fact that young offenders are eager for an "exit strategy" from violent crime that doesn't make them lose face with their peers. Operation Ceasefire and DMI accomplish that, he said.

Pacom Works to Advance U.S.-India Strategic Partnership

By Donna Miles | American Forces Press Service |
14 August 2012

This article was originally posted August 14 to the Department of Defense website.

Camp Smith, Hawaii — As U.S. Pacific Command strives to build stronger alliances and partnerships across the Asia-Pacific region, one of its big focuses is on taking the military-to-military relationship with India to the next level.

The new defense strategic guidance announced in January resets U.S. priorities toward the region, specifically calling for investments in a long-term strategic partnership with India "to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region."

Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, who took command of Pacom in March, is using that guidance as his marching orders as he implements the expanded Asia-Pacific strategy.

"We hope to partner with [India] to share the strategic landscape as it applies to how we apply security to the

globe that allows prosperity and peace, freedom of movement and ... prosperity in the world," he told American Forces Press Service.

India's strategic location between West Asia and the Middle East, and its ascent across economic, military, diplomatic and informational fronts, makes it an influential leader in the region, said Army Colonel Michael Albaneze, director of Locklear's India strategic focus group.

The group of six military and civilian experts, one of three "mini think tanks" within the Pacom staff, advises Locklear and his senior staff on a broad range of issues that shape India's strategic environment, and ways to advance the U.S.-India strategic partnership, Albaneze explained.

It's a partnership that's been slow in forming, he conceded. For the past half-century, India has been a leader in the nonaligned movement, and it has an official policy of being "strategically autonomous."

That said, Albaneze recognized signs of India's willingness to engage increasingly with the United States as it rises on the world stage. The two countries had their first strategic dialogue in 2010, with two more since then, the most recent in June.

Without a long history of cooperation, Albaneze noted a "maturing process" that could, over time, evolve into a more typical relationship characterized by routine engagement across the board. "We are not quite there yet, but there is a lot of effort in trying to move in that direction," he said.

One high point is the exercise program. India partners with the United States in dozens of military exercises every year as it builds an increasingly strong military. Its navy is one of the world's largest, and its army deploys routinely for peacekeeping operations, Albaneze noted.

Most of the exercises tend to be at the component level. The annual Exercise Malabar involves the U.S. and Indian navies, with several international observers during its latest iteration, in April. The U.S. and Indian armies train together through Yudh Abhyas exercises, frequently weaving humanitarian assistance and disaster response scenarios into the engagements.

The two countries' air forces train together through Cope India exercises, and the Indian air force participated for the first time in the U.S.-sponsored Red Flag exercise in 2008. Although India has no marine corps, U.S. Marines train with an Indian army brigade that specializes in amphibious operations during Exercise Shatrugat.

"Those are just the major mil-mil engagements," Albaneze said, noting a broad array of other military-to-military engagements and exchanges at U.S. and Indian military training centers and schoolhouses.

Both the United States and India hope to increase the complexity of the exercise program over time, he said, and to elevate them into joint engagements that involve more than just one service.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta underscored during his visit to India in June, just ahead of the 2012 U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue, that a "close partnership with America will be key to meeting India's own stated aims of a modern and effective defense force."

"We have built a strong foundation," the secretary said. "But for this relationship to truly provide security for this region and for the world, we will need to deepen our defense and security cooperation."

That, Panetta said, extends to closer collaboration in sharing defense technology and developing future systems. Despite India's decision not to buy a U.S. advanced jet fighter, U.S. defense sales to India have grown to more than \$8 billion with the potential to increase more.

The secretary recognized legal restrictions that have hampered some sales, and vowed to work to eliminate as many hurdles as possible.

"The United States is firmly committed to providing the best defense technology possible to India," he told Indian leaders in Delhi, while recognizing India's ambitions to advance its own defense industry. "We are both leaders in technology development and we can do incredible work together," Panetta said.

Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter followed up that visit in July, encouraging India to move forward in engaging with the United States across the spectrum, from dialogue to exercises to defense trade and research cooperation.

"We want to develop a joint vision for U.S.-India defense cooperation," Carter said. "We want to knock down any remaining bureaucratic barriers in our defense relationship, and strip away the impediments. And we want to set big goals to achieve."

Recognizing the many mutual and converging interests the United States and India share, Albaneze said he's hopeful about their future prospects.

"I am an optimist on the relationship," he said. "Every time there is a hiccup, I just think that it's part of our

getting to learn more and more about each other, and how we interact.

"Sometimes it's two steps forward and one step back," Albaneze continued. "But at the end of the day, we still made a step forward — and that is really what we are trying to do in the region."

U.S. Pledges More Aid, Continued Support for Syrian People

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 13 August 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has announced the United States will contribute an additional \$5.5 million to support the more than 140,000 people who have fled Syria's ongoing violence.

"With these contributions, the United States is now providing nearly \$82 million for food, emergency health care, blankets, hygiene kits and other humanitarian relief" for Syrian refugees, the secretary said during a news conference in Istanbul August 11.

Clinton spoke following a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to discuss how the United States and Turkey can work together with international partners to respond to the growing humanitarian and political crisis in Syria.

The country has been embroiled in violent conflict since March 2011, when Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad launched brutal crackdowns on political opponents that have now left more than 14,000 people dead. Clinton and Davutoğlu said the violence is continuing to increase and that more and more Syrians are crossing borders every day seeking safety.

Clinton commended the governments of Syrian neighbors Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon for their generosity in taking on the significant financial burden of providing shelter, medical care, food and water to thousands of refugees.

Davutoğlu said Turkey alone is now hosting between 50,000 and 55,000 refugees, with an additional 3,000 requesting entry each day.

"We always want to open our doors to our Syrian brothers and sisters, and we have been mobilizing our resources in order to help them as much as we can," the foreign minister said. "But this increasing number of refugees is a clear indicator of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria."

Clinton commended the country for its hospitality, and thanked the Turkish people for having "not only opened your borders, but your arms and your hearts." The latest

round of U.S. assistance is targeted toward communities who have sought refuge in Turkey.

In addition to aid for those who have fled the violence, Clinton said, the United States and its partners are working to support the estimated 2 million people in Syria who remain in need of assistance.

She said the United States is providing communications equipment, nonlethal assistance and direct financial aid for the Syrian opposition working to end the fighting and begin the transition to a free and democratic country without Assad.

"As we work to help the opposition inside Syria, we are continuing to increase pressure from the outside," Clinton said.

President Obama announced a new round of sanctions August 10 designed to disrupt support for Assad's regime from the outside.

"We are committed to take every step we can to isolate the regime, starve it of resources to finance its brutal crackdown on the Syrian people, and to highlight and expose those who continue to support someone who is surely one of the most brutal and bloody dictators operating in the world today," White House press secretary Jay Carney said August 10.

Later that day, State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said in a statement that the sanctions restrict Syria's state-run oil company from selling gasoline to Iran. The United States charges Iran and Hezbollah, a pro-Iranian group based in Lebanon, with actively advising, supplying and assisting the Syrian regime in carrying out gross human rights violations.

Clinton said that in addition to providing humanitarian aid and imposing sanctions, the United States and its international allies are supporting the Syrian people by helping to plan and prepare for what comes next.

"Last month, major opposition groups came together in Cairo to voice their support for a detailed transition plan and a vision of Syria that is united, pluralistic and democratic," the secretary said. "They have since begun to rally support for this plan inside Syria."

She said the United States supports these efforts and stands ready to help the Syrian people as they work to stabilize and eventually rebuild their economy and government.

U.S. Trade Deficit Shrinks, Exceeding Economists' Expectations

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 10 August 2012

Washington — The U.S. trade deficit in June shrank a significant 10.7 percent from May to \$42.9 billion, thanks to continued growth in exports, according to a new Commerce Department report.

“Today’s data shows that U.S. exports in June posted their highest level on record for the second time this year, despite challenging economic conditions,” Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank said following the report’s August 9 release by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. “We also remain on track toward exceeding last year’s export total of \$2.1 trillion,” she added.

Exports in June reached \$185 billion as imports declined 1.5 percent from May to \$227.9 billion, resulting in the lowered deficit that exceeded economists’ expectations.

Goods exports for the month hit \$132.8 billion, the highest level on record. The increase reflected a rise in exports of consumer goods; automotive vehicles, parts and engines; industrial supplies and materials; other goods; and capital goods. A decrease occurred in foods, feeds and beverages.

Imports of goods in June decreased from May to \$190.3 billion, reflecting drops in industrial supplies and materials; capital goods; consumer goods; and foods, feeds and beverages. Increases occurred in automotive vehicles, parts and engines.

Services exports decreased \$0.2 billion from May to June, accounted for largely by decreases in business, professional and technical services; insurance and financial services; and freight and port services.

Imports of services increased from May by \$0.1 billion, mostly reflecting an increase in passenger fares.

Blank said that though much work remains, the United States “continues to make historic progress” toward achieving President Obama’s goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

She said that since the National Export Initiative was announced in 2009, the United States has seen a significant increase in exports that has helped to create 4.5 million jobs.

The June figures show surpluses with Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore and Egypt. Deficits were recorded with China, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the European Union, Japan, Mexico, Germany, Ireland, Canada, Nigeria, Taiwan, South Korea and

Venezuela.

Martian Geography Bears Marks of Tectonic Plates, Research Says

10 August 2012

Washington — Earth’s crust is composed of seven tectonic plates, which shift, collide and occasionally cause earthquakes. The surface of Mars is composed of similar structures, a NASA/University of California-Los Angeles geologist reports in an August publication, and may be subject to some of the same hazards.

“Mars is at a primitive stage of plate tectonics,” said An Yin, professor of Earth sciences and the author of the research. “It gives us a glimpse of how the early Earth may have looked and may help us understand how plate tectonics began on Earth.”

Yin based his findings on analysis of satellite images from two NASA missions: THEMIS (Time History of Events and Macroscale Interactions During Substorms) and the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO). THEMIS is a fleet of five satellites in Earth orbit studying the solar wind and Earth’s magnetic field; the MRO is circling Mars and, using imaging equipment, seeking signs of water.

“When I studied the satellite images from Mars, many of the features looked very much like fault systems I have seen in the Himalayas and Tibet” in previous research, Yin said.

Notably, Yin points to images revealing geologic features that we know on Earth to be caused by slippage on the fault line between tectonic plates. One Mars image shows a very smooth, flat side of a canyon, for example, and another depicts a steep, smooth cliff.

“You don’t see these features anywhere else on other planets in our solar system, other than Earth and Mars,” Yin said. His research is in the August issue of *Lithosphere*, a journal focused on processes that affect Earth’s crust, upper mantle and landscapes.

Yin’s research finding a shared trait between Earth and Mars was published the same week NASA landed the rover Curiosity on Mars. After the craft relayed its first images back to Earth, scientists remarked on the strong resemblance between the spacecraft’s surroundings and the Mojave Desert of the American Southwest.

Another previously recognized feature of the Martian surface is what scientists call the longest and deepest canyon in the solar system. Named Valles Marineris, the canyon is some 4,000 kilometers long, and scientists are puzzled about how it could have formed.

"It is really a plate boundary, with horizontal motion; that is kind of shocking, but the evidence is quite clear," Yin said. "It is very similar to the Earth's Dead Sea fault system, which has also opened up and is moving horizontally."

Devastating earthquakes can be the result when Earth's tectonic plates crash together, and Yin thinks quakes may also occur on Mars, but only very rarely.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)